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ON PAGE A-19

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Soviets Seen Hastening Big Carrier

Photos Show Work On Nuclear Vessel

LONDON, Aug. 7 (AP)—Three satellite photographs showing the Soviet Navy's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, under construction in a Black Sea shipyard, indicate that work has been speeded up on the 75,000-ton flattop, Jane's Defense Weekly reported today.

The photos, published in the weekly, show the carrier being constructed in two halves at the Nikolaiev Shipyard-444, alongside a smaller Kiev-class carrier and an amphibious landing ship.

Western defense specialists believe the carrier, which they expect to be called The Kremlin, is the first of up to eight Soviet carriers equal in size to the USS Enterprise, the largest American carrier.

The Soviet carriers will be "potentially formidable adversaries for the U.S. Navy's carrier battle groups," the weekly noted.

Work began in January 1983 on the nuclear-powered carrier.

Jane's quoted intelligence sources as estimating the carrier will be ready for sea trials in early 1988, and operational by 1994.

The weekly said that "clearly the carrier has been accorded priority by the commander-in-chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral of the Fleet Sergei Gorshkov."

Jane's spokesman Richard Coltart declined to say where the satellite photos were obtained. Jane's editors are known to have an extensive network of sources in both the East and West. The weekly is produced by the Jane's

Publishing Co., which issues military yearbooks considered authoritative by defense circles.

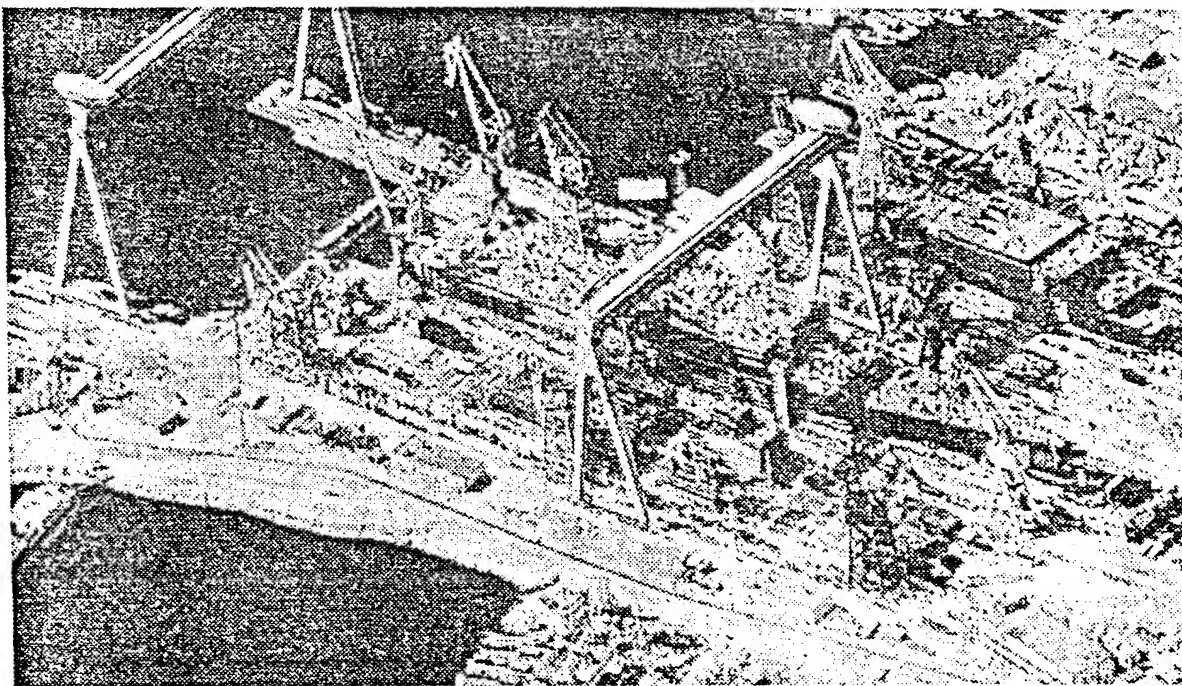
Capt. John Moore, editor of "Jane's Fighting Ships," told The Associated Press in a telephone interview, "The carriers will add significantly to Soviet naval power."

The photographs show the carrier's hull in two parts—a 866-foot bow section with half of a flight deck and a 239-foot stern section with the other half of the flight deck.

Moore said an angled flight deck will be built onto the vessel later.

One of the photos indicates the carrier, lying below two giant overhead cranes, will likely be armed with vertical silo-launched surface-to-air missiles forward of the ship's superstructure, Jane's said.

Western intelligence sources believe the carrier will initially carry fixed-wing MiG23 Flogger strike planes, but will later be equipped with supersonic Sukhoi Su27 Flanker all-weather fighters.



Associated Press

Satellite photo shows nuclear aircraft carrier under construction in a Soviet shipyard on the Black Sea.